

### 9.3.25 meeting minutes PC

This meeting was conducted remotely.

Members present: Alison Anand, Ian Bender, Virginia Clarke, Rebecca Connell, Mark Fausel

Members absent: none (*2 vacancies*)

Others present: Keith Osborne (Director of Planning and Zoning), Tom Astle (MMCTV)

#### **1. Welcome**

Clarke welcomed everyone and started the meeting at 7 PM.

#### **2. Review agenda and public comment on non-agenda items**

“Other business” was brought forward , and Osborne announced the hiring of an Assistant Zoning Administrator, which will free Osborne up for doing more planning work. This individual will have to be recommended by the PC and approved by the SB, but Osborne feels he will do well with the job. There was no public comment.

#### **3. Review minutes of 8.6.25 meeting**

As there were no corrections or additions to the minutes, they were accepted into the record as written.

#### **4. Town Plan 2026**

Clarke began by reviewing the timeline for work on the Plan September - December. (This timeline can be found in the meeting materials) She said this PC meeting would cover review of the new FLU section and map, the revised Introduction, and some formatting details such as the change of the name “Almanac” to “Data and Additional Information.” On Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> Osborne has reserved the Library Community Room for a 2-hour special meeting of the SB and the public, for a presentation of the initial draft of the new Plan. This will be preceded by a mass postcard mailing, a Times Ink ad, and some FPF posts. In early December the SB will vote on approving the Plan for public vote at Town Meeting in March.

Connell brought up the question of whether or not food and childcare should be provided at the Nov 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Clarke said that she (Connell) should be talking to Josh and the SB before any arrangements of this type were made, as the SB may have their own thoughts about whether food and childcare would be welcome. Connell also brought up the idea of funding these activities through a community-building organization to which she belongs, “A More Perfect Union.” This will also be discussed with the SB.

The Comision then discussed the content of the revised Introduction, beginning with the fact that some of the material, such as the vision, hasn’t changed much from the 2018 Plan, but that some challenges have become more urgent and some external factors, such as new legislation, have changed quite a bit. The most significant changes occur in the subsection of “Responsibilities” in which all the new statutes passed since the 2018 Plan which have municipal mandates are listed with brief descriptions. Discussion followed

about Act 59, the “30 X 30” Act, as to whether each town needed to conserve 30% of its land or just the state as a whole; and about Act 69, the “Chip Act,” which allows for Tax Increment financing to help enable housing; and Act 121, which will require river corridor regulations by 2028. Additional statutes that either indirectly or tangentially will affect Richmond over the life of this Plan, were also briefly discussed (this information can be found in the meeting materials under “Introduction”)

There was further discussion about the “Black Lives Matter” sign that the SB voted to allow to be posted year-round (actually was approved on 8/18/25.), and is mentioned in the “Inclusion” subsection of the Introduction. This discussion was followed by a description of some formatting changes to the Plan, such as removing the term “technical plan” from each section, and instead just calling them “sections.” There was further discussion about the term “rural character,” as well as the idea of conserving land while adding most development into the already developed areas of cities, town and village centers. Clarke added that the title “Data and Additional Information” was tentatively planned to replace the title “Almanac” as no one seemed to know what that included in the 2018 Plan. Fausel ended the discussion on the Introduction by suggesting that a quote from the formation of the Round Church in 1812 “Each shall peaceably enjoy their equal share of said house” was a nice comment on Richmond’s inclusivity. Clarke said maybe this could be added into the Introduction.

The discussion then turned to the 2026 Plan’s FLU section. Clarke said that the main change here is the adoption of the new state and regional land use designations which were mandated by Act 181. Our municipal FLU map has to be “compatible” with CCRPC’s map, so we took our land use categories from the draft map that we were given earlier in the year. This more specific and detailed map will replace our “fuzzy” map from the 2018 Plan, and Clarke said she is hoping that it will be useful to us when we begin to think about revising the zoning for our large A/R district. Clarke mentioned that the only category we didn’t designate exactly as CCRPC has done is the “Planned Growth Areas” which we have chosen to call “Village Areas.” These two categories encompass the neighborhoods just outside the “Village Center” and have almost identical definitions in the state mandate, and Clarke felt that using the term “Village Areas” was more attractive politically. She reminded the Commission that the SB had voted to adopt the Tier 1b overlay concept, which will reduce the amount of 250 oversight in the village center and in the neighborhoods, whether “planned growth” or “village” areas.

The “Transition area,” “Resource-based recreation area,” which is the Cochran’s Ski Area, and the “Enterprise area” which would be our commercial area up near Exit 11, were discussed. Clarke reminded the Commission that these FLU maps were not regulatory (zoning) maps, but existed for general future planning purposes. The gravel pit on Kenyon Rd was discussed; Clarke didn’t know if this would be an “Enterprise area” or not as the Steering Committee hadn’t focused on it yet. The central/commercial area of Jonesville was briefly discussed. This area is being given the new designation of “Hamlet” in the

CCRPC FLU map, which we are thinking of keeping for now in our FLU map until the PC can devote more time to thinking about the area.

Clarke then talked about the three rural categories: “General,” Agriculture and Forestry,” and Conservation.” These areas make up what Richmond calls its Ag/Res District, and vary with the amount of development that is present, from most (General) to least (Conservation). She said that members of Richmond’s Conservation Commission and others were looking at the CCRPC map to make sure that all parcels known to be conserved be easement were included in the “Rural: Conservation” area. Floodplains are also shown as conserved, as are high elevations or slopes and some areas that have been mapped by the state as high priority forest blocks. She added that our Richmond FLU section has basically two future land use goals: to continue to develop with “smart growth” and to maintain rural character. This accords with the mandated strategy of locating most development in the already developed areas of town. After the new Plan is approved, the PC will need to adjust zoning and subdivision regulations (where necessary) to carry out this strategy.

Oborne then screen shared the first draft of the new CCRPC FLU map, and the Commissioners identified the areas previously discussed. There is a second draft, which wasn’t available to share at the moment, but we know there are some changes. CCRPC has also said that after the map is approved for their 8-year ECOS Plan, they will be periodically revising it as new information is received. Clarke suggested that the PC spend some time individually looking at the map to see if they have any further questions or comments about it. A link to the map can be found easily on the front page of the CCRPC’s website. Osborne said he would also try to send a copy directly to the Commissioners. There is also a summary of the comments they received from the municipalities.

A short discussion followed about the Farr Farm on the Huntington Rd and whether or not that should be in the “Transition” area as it would be a useful extension of the walkable village if it was ever taken out of farming. The suggestion was made to talk to the Farris’ about this idea. Further discussion followed about whether these FLU maps, even though not currently regulatory, will become regulatory over time. Osborne pointed out that the PC is the firewall here as the Planning Commissioners are the ones who create any zoning and subdivision changes, and can decide what is appropriate for Richmond. Fausel, Bender and Anand suggested that the FLU map should state “This is not a zoning map.”

## **5 and 6. Other business and updates, and Adjourn**

As there was no other business, Ian motioned to adjourn and Mark seconded. There were no objections, so Clarke adjourned the meeting at 9:02 PM. Next meeting will be on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

Minutes submitted by Virginia Clarke

